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20 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Rm. A3042
Washington, DC 20529



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

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FILE:

EAC 03 187 53078

Office: VERMONT SERVICE CENTER

Date: **JAN 06 2005**

IN RE:

Petitioner:
Beneficiary:

PETITION: Petition for Alien Fiancé(e) Pursuant to Section 101(a)(15)(K) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(K)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER: SELF-REPRESENTED

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All documents have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.

Robert P. Wiemann

Robert P. Wiemann, Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The nonimmigrant visa petition was denied by the Acting Director, Vermont Service Center, and is now on appeal before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO). The appeal will be dismissed.

The petitioner is a citizen of the United States who seeks to classify the beneficiary, a native and citizen of Pakistan, as the fiancé of a United States citizen pursuant to section 101(a)(15)(K) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(K).

The acting director denied the petition after determining that the petitioner and the beneficiary had not personally met within two years before the date of filing the petition, as required by section 214(d) of the Act, and that the petitioner had not established that compliance with the meeting requirement would result in extreme hardship to the petitioner. *Decision of the Acting Director*, dated November 13, 2003.

Section 101(a)(15)(K) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(K), provides nonimmigrant classification to an alien who:

- (i) is the fiancé(e) of a U.S. citizen and who seeks to enter the United States solely to conclude a valid marriage with that citizen within 90 days after admission;
- (ii) has concluded a valid marriage with a citizen of the United States who is the petitioner, is the beneficiary of a petition to accord a status under section 201(b)(2)(A)(i) that was filed under section 204 by the petitioner, and seeks to enter the United States to await the approval of such petition and the availability to the alien of an immigrant visa; or
- (iii) is the minor child of an alien described in clause (i) or (ii) and is accompanying, or following to join, the alien.

Section 214(d) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(d), states, in pertinent part, that a fiancé(e) petition:

... shall be approved only after satisfactory evidence is submitted by the petitioner to establish that the parties have previously met in person within two years before the date of filing the petition, have a bona fide intention to marry, and are legally able and actually willing to conclude a valid marriage in the United States within a period of ninety days after the alien's arrival. ...

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(k)(2), the petitioner may be exempted from this requirement for a meeting if it is established that compliance would:

- (1) result in extreme hardship to the petitioner; or
- (2) that compliance would violate strict and long-established customs of the beneficiary's foreign culture or social practice, as where marriages are traditionally arranged by the parents of the contracting parties and the prospective bride and groom are prohibited from meeting subsequent to the arrangement and prior to the wedding day. In addition to establishing that the required meeting would be a violation of custom or practice, the petitioner must also establish

that any and all other aspects of the traditional arrangements have been or will be met in accordance with the custom or practice.

The regulation at section 214.2 does not define what may constitute extreme hardship to the petitioner. Therefore, each claim of extreme hardship must be judged on a case-by-case basis taking into account the totality of the petitioner's circumstances. Generally, a director looks at whether the petitioner can demonstrate the existence of circumstances that are (1) not within the power of the petitioner to control or change, and (2) likely to last for a considerable duration or the duration cannot be determined with any degree of certainty.

The petitioner filed the Petition for Alien Fiancé(e) (Form I-129F) with the Immigration and Naturalization Service [now Citizenship and Immigration Services] on June 11, 2003. Therefore, the petitioner and the beneficiary were required to have met during the period that began on June 11, 2001 and ended on June 11, 2003.

In response to the director's request for evidence and additional information, the petitioner submitted a letter requesting a waiver of the meeting requirement because she had undergone ear surgery and it was recommended that she not fly; her studies keep her very busy and flying to Pakistan is expensive.

On appeal, the petitioner indicates that she underwent her second ear surgery on January 6, 2003 and could not fly for approximately six months after that date. The petitioner requests a waiver of the meeting requirement based on her surgery and, in the alternative, states that she will travel to Pakistan to meet the beneficiary. *Form I-290B*, undated. In support of her assertions, the petitioner submits a letter from a physician stating that the petitioner underwent surgery on June 17, 2002 and January 6, 2003 for otosclerosis and was precluded from flying for six months postoperatively in order to heal. *Letter from Elmhurst Hospital Center*, dated November 24, 2003.

The AAO notes that although section 214(d) of the Act requires the petitioner and the beneficiary to meet, it does not require the petitioner to travel to the beneficiary's home country. The record on appeal does not demonstrate that the petitioner and the beneficiary explored options for a meeting beyond the petitioner traveling to Pakistan, including, but not limited to the beneficiary traveling to meet the petitioner in the United States or a bordering country. Further, the financial and time commitments required for travel to a foreign country are a common requirement to those filing the Form I-129F petition and do not constitute extreme hardship to the petitioner. The AAO acknowledges that the petitioner was unable to travel to meet the beneficiary for approximately one year of the required two-year period as a result of her two required ear surgeries. The AAO notes, however, that based on the record the petitioner could have traveled to meet the beneficiary anytime between June 11, 2001, the beginning of the two-year period, and June 17, 2002, the date of her first surgery, in order to comply with the meeting requirement based on the filing date of the instant Form I-129F petition.

As stated *supra*, each claim of extreme hardship must be judged on a case-by-case basis taking into account the totality of the petitioner's circumstances. Generally, a director looks at whether the petitioner can demonstrate the existence of circumstances that are (1) not within the power of the petitioner to control or change, and (2) likely to last for a considerable duration or the duration cannot be determined with any degree of certainty. In the instant application, the petitioner's inability to fly was limited to a finite period defined by the dates on which she underwent surgery. Her incapacitation is therefore not "likely to last for a considerable duration;" the duration, as stated by the petitioner's physician, was identified with certainty.

The evidence of record does not establish that the petitioner and the beneficiary met as required. Taking into account the totality of the circumstances as the petitioner has presented them, the AAO does not find that compliance with the meeting requirement would result in extreme hardship to the petitioner or would violate strict and long-established customs of the beneficiary's foreign culture or social practice. Therefore, the appeal will be dismissed.

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(k)(2), the denial of the petition is without prejudice. The petitioner may file a new Form I-129F petition on the beneficiary's behalf when sufficient evidence is available.

The burden of proof in these proceedings rests solely with the petitioner. *See* Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. The petitioner has not met that burden.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.